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SONGWRITER PROFILE



Award-Winning Film Composer

by Dan Kimpel

An auteur equally at home in realms of the Stratocaster or the Stradivarius, Los Angeles composer and producer Anthony Marinelli soars far above stylistic pigeonholes. His score for the upcoming feature, *Chapter 27*, a chronicle of the last days in the life of John Lennon and his assassin, Mark David Chapman, is a new addition to a list of over 50 films including *15 Minutes*, *Timecode*, *God Said Ha!* and *Two Days in the Valley*. The winner of an Emmy for his music for daytime drama *Santa Barbara*—and with an extensive list of Clio and Belding award-winning commercials—this prolific L.A. native first established himself by embracing the emerging technological trends invented in the early '80's, and subsequently lending his expertise to projects with such luminaries as Arthur Rubenstein, Jack Nitzsche and Quincy Jones.

Marinelli observes that, for a generation, the Lennon assassination heralded an end of the innocence. His original concept for the score was to enlist friends from the rock world and improvise "a trippy, psychedelic rock score." But the project and the score underwent a 180-degree turn: The final version features a 60-piece orchestra performing a traditional score that the composer says owes no small debt to the influence of Tchaikovsky. "I used three flutes, like in *Nutcracker Suite*," he says. "I wrote a pop song with Rich Price, but the accompaniment is still the orchestra with celeste, harp and strings. It's very contrary to the pop sensibility." Despite these reflective touches there are sections that mirror a killer's manic intensity. "Chapman was in a delusion and I went for it. We can do that in film music, but we often don't do it enough."

In a completely different mode, Marinelli offered his production skills to singer/songwriter Shawn Amos for *Thank You Shirt-ee May*, Amos' song suite recreation of the life and times of his late mother, an R&B singer in the Sixties. "Shawn asked me to play on one song, then maybe produce some songs and it ended up being the whole album. I just kept going, it was very heartfelt and emotional, and I guess I'm drawn to those types of projects," Marinelli avows.

Another project with significant heart was *Mayor of The Sunset Strip*, a documentary on legendary L.A. scenester, Rodney Bingenheimer. With its tremendous amount of source music, Marinelli was hesitant to overload the independent picture with score. "I didn't want to flood the whole thing full of music—it would be meaningless," he notes. But he determined what his contribution should be: "I played what I thought was Rodney. In the midst of this profound exuberance, fame, beautiful Hollywood and happy people with success and money, there was a lot of struggle."

This past summer Marinelli composed a tone poem, *In The Family*, featuring narration by writer/actress Julia Sweeney. Commissioned by the L.A. Philharmonic, the 22-minute piece, performed for two nights with a 90-piece orchestra at the Hollywood Bowl, is based on Sweeney's adoption of a baby from China and her travails as a single parent. "It's comedic, but it goes all over the place," Marinelli says.

By age 16, Marinelli was already a player in the L.A. studio scene, and his keyboard work was featured on Michael Jackson's *Thriller* plus tracks with James Brown, Lionel Richie, Van Halen, Supertramp, Diane Reeves, and others. More recently he re-imagined Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass classics in edgy, modern remixes featuring Ozomatli for *Rewhipped*.

Having recently relocated his studio from the center of Hollywood to his home in Encino, Marinelli modestly notes the progress of his expanding creative livelihood that includes another forthcoming feature, *Ripple Effect*, starring Forrest Whitaker. "My world's got a lot in it, two kids, my music career, my family and friends." And he intends to maintain the diversity that is his forte. "I don't look at music as categorized or chopped up. I don't care if it's roots driven or classical music. It's all just sound—sound and emotions."

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